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# Graduate Students Collect Item-Filled Backpacks for Area Foster Children

May-04-2010

The Eastern Illinois University Graduate Student Advisory Council recently collected 32 backpacks full of essential supplies for foster children in the Charleston area.

As part of Project Backpack, the graduate students accepted donated backpacks and items to fill them, including soap, shampoo, toothbrushes and toothpaste, combs, books and crayons. They were recently delivered to Charleston's Department of Children and Family Services office.

The project was inspired by GSAC member Bridget Purdy, who was once a foster child herself. Purdy worked with the Charleston DCFS office to identify the needed items for the backpacks.

"Anything of service is worth doing, especially for those who have nothing," Purdy said. "I'm coming from the same place as these kids in the foster system. I didn't get out of that system until I was 13."

GSAC member Amanda Fountain said the organization was happy to help such a worthy cause.

"The goal is to give back to the Charleston community and provide some comfort for the children in the foster system," said GSAC member Amanda Fountain. "Often, these children are given a trash bag when they are displaced from a home to gather their belongings. The backpacks are meant to give them something new that they can call their own when they have to move. The essential items are meant to make their transition easier."

GSAC member Zachary Thuring said the organization is committed to giving back "to the community that has given us so much support."

Bill Elliott, assistant dean of Graduate and International Admissions at EIU, thanked all who participated.

"It's been a pleasure to work with GSAC this past year and witness the many ways in which their work has had a positive influence on our campus, and now our community," Elliott said. "Thanks to EIU and community members for their generous support to this worthy event, and to GSAC for all the work involved to make life a little better for foster children in need."

For more information about GSAC's Project Backpack, please contact Fountain at [aefountain@eiu.edu](mailto:aefountain@eiu.edu) or 508-813-0483.



Bill Elliott, assistant dean of Graduate and International Admissions at Eastern Illinois University, and Zachary Thuring, a member of the EIU Graduate Student Advisory Council, prepare items for Project Backpack. The group collected items to fill 32 backpacks, which were donated to the Charleston office of the Department of Children and Family Services to benefit area foster children.